

SPECULATIVE TRIBUNE #4

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EDITORIAL RECORDING TO THE PLAN

by TOMA

During the days previous to the opening of the Chicago Biennial, each installation was built and mounted by the participants or their assistants. As a Rude Goldberg machine, the process followed a number of continuous, calculated and concatenated tasks, which took each project towards an expositive state. In this way, at the opening, large part of the intentions, processes, complexities and contrarities were veiled to the spectator. Behind the charm of the resulting forms, its ways to be built and produced were hidden.

The curatorial proposal had the nerve to trust the success of the whole exhibition on each one of the participants by delivering on them several liberties in format and in the execution of the proposals. However, this sort of diastole, this precious act of trust, could have had a systole: the definition of a State of Art could be approached by encouraging collective dialogue, enriched at the same time by the individual freedoms given to each participant. As someone auto-critically said, "we missed the chance of a collective meeting, everyone in one round table, like the Cold War". During the intense days of inaugurations and receptions, there were no internal contexts for the generation of real collective situations in which speculating on the state of art of architecture became possible.

Now back home, we've learned a lesson: we fell into the trap. Before we got to Chicago, we relied on our capability of producing settings for working both openly and auto-critically, and we trusted more in improvisation than in a detailed plan. The many social events programmed suppressed our plan-breaking plan. We followed the first scheme, cancelling the possibility of losing control.

This experience -the biennial-, just as a building, brings along an image of ourselves and an overview of a certain social and temporal context. In this case, abundance was favored over scrutiny. Differing to Goldberg machine, the opportunity of a chain reaction that the concurrence of projects could have triggered was dismissed. In this way, things stayed under control and the plans developed just as expected. Losing control makes possible to, at least temporarily, destroy hierarchies, crush exclusiveness on decision-making, explore other orders and speculate on possibilities of collective organization.

Maybe we don't need chaos as a permanent condition, but it is essential to take things as far as possible and to let them stay -at least for a while- in the very moment of their collapse. Thus, we can transform this "state of the art" into something more than a "state" in its static sense, representative of a historical moment, and understand this state in a collective context of transformation, capable of working, to change our reality. Ultimately, what is more interesting about the Goldberg machine is its image of an open and transparent mechanism.

NINE ELEVEN WHEN ARCHITECTURE DUPRES

Extract from PROGRAMMED DISMANTLEMENT OF DIEGO PORTALES BUILDING

UNCTAD III/GMMCC/DIEGO PORTALES
by Javier Riosco Arcos

Shift of Government;
change in use and in
meaning.

I want to explain some processes respecting the change of what we now know as the "Diego Portales" building.

The project was thought to be the first building destined for culture (once the UNCTAD III was over); it is carried out the donation of 500 art works, coming from different parts of the world. Spontaneously, the building is beginning to be called "The Museum of the People", officially "Gabriela Mistral Metropolitan Cultural Center" (GMMCC). As well, the installations were enabled, giving a main use to the building's

casino, where indeed citizen of all kinds joined.

On September, 11th (eleventh) 1973 (nineteen seventy three), due to the bombing against "La Moneda" (the president's house), the Junta of the Military Government had to have an operation center; the chosen building would be exactly the GMMCC, which would change its name definitively with the inauguration of the bust of Diego Portales -which took place, symbolically, on September 11th (eleventh) 1975 (nineteen seventy five) at 11:00 (eleven o'clock) am (14)-, located just at the facade of the building, in the main stairs. This event was informed by press in the following terms:

"A bust of the illustrious public man Diego Portales was inaugurated yesterday in homage to the man that in the first half of the last century gave definitive personality to the Chilean republic." (15)

The ex UNCTAD building is remodeled, the art works -with other elements stored there- were destroyed, burned, given away, among other things. In addition, the building change its facade, some accesses were

closed, the glasses were replaced by walls, fences were installed. That is to say, the image and the shape mutated, leaving it covered and isolated. Opposed to what was first pretended.

In 1990 (nineteen ninety) democracy arrives in Chile, nevertheless the building continues in the same condition that during the dictatorship. The governments from then on will show no interest in making changes to the building, which was destined to conventions and meetings, of different groups and institutions. Lapsed fifteen years without maintenance the result is: On March 5th (fifth) 2006 (two thousands and six) the emblematic building of Santiago burns. A mammoth fire destroys 1/3 (a third) of the building. Nowadays the building remains in the same conditions, waiting the beginning of the construction of the project winner of the "International public contest of architectural preliminary plans Gabriela Mistral cultural center".

14. 11. SEPTIEMBRE 1975, QUE PASA, Santiago, Chile, Septiembre de 1975, p.8, col. 15. BUSTO a Diego Portales se inauguró Ayer, NN, Santiago, 12 de septiembre de 1975, p.x, col.3.

AFTER THE REVOLUTION

by Xavier Wrona

A revolution has happened. It was the work of a group of armed intellectual radicals, it fundamentally altered the relationship between working classes and means of production everywhere. Ideas were appropriated by policy makers and implemented on a large scale, spreading over the vast majority of the globe, engulfing people in all countries. Contradicting all fears, this revolution was not led by the proletariat, but by the capital.

The revolution was architectural. Laid out in theory, articulated in plan, and implemented in practice, it did to the world what architects do to buildings: it imposed an order. The revolution led by Friedman, Hayek, and Nozick imposed an architectural order in which any intervention of the collective "state" was seen as a barrier to the "natural self-regulation of individual needs." It regimented reality, turning each passing day into a spectacular confirmation of its principles and their massive

consequences on societies.

This is an architectural review, one that will not focus on "remarkable buildings" but on the massive and revolutionary architectural shifts of societies. We must be done with the idea that architecture is a history of buildings: architecture is the means by which a society embodies moral law in reality. It is the formatting of the real contained in each understanding of the world. This formatting affects all human production: clothing, music, class struggle, the latest gadgets, the colors and shapes of flags... Architecture is a function, it is the transmission belt linking ideas to the construction of the world. It is that by which a system of ideas attempts to perpetuate itself throughout history and across territories. If we have confused



architecture with building, it is only because buildings are the human production that comes closest to a totalizing image of an accomplished "ideal". But architecture does not belong to buildings. It is as much present, and performs just as effectively its task, in a collared shirt or a comma than it does in a Doric column.

The only question architecture was ever concerned with in the making of the built environment was what order should govern its production: whether through the multi-millennial system of "The Orders of Architecture," or through the functionalist, historical, metabolical, futurist, or postmodern orders of the 20th century. Buildings, of course, require no such ordering abstract system to be useable or functional. What is at stake, instead, is the order that ought to be applied to the world for which the building is only a metaphor. What is at stake in architecture is the total sum of effects a new world order entails in the organization of reality. In this process, buildings are models of the world order.

"After The Revolution" is a review devoted to the analysis of this new global architecture.



WHEN ARCHITECTS BURN OUT

by Miguel Rodríguez Casellas

I've learnt to enjoy, quite sadistically, those instances when my take on architectural education produces paralysis. I am hired to help students visualize the light at the end of their tunnel of speculation, and there I am, as was done to me so many times before when I was a vulnerable student, inflicting a customized crisis of the object to a young soul who did not sign up for it.

Nine Eleven played a similar trick on architecture as a whole. The spectacular destruction of the towers in real time accelerated the ongoing dematerialization of architecture: suddenly, magazines were broadcasting the remnants of the object, either through projects from the then emerging field of landscape urbanism, or giving prominence to the ultimate skin or facade development. After Nine Eleven, the heroic object was displaced by the rendered image, and architecture as built form increasingly saw itself competing with its own virtuality. A paralysis of the subject, who was unable to think freely, away from his/her anxieties, preceded the crisis of the object, as I recalled it.

But that was architectural media: popular outlets of design saw an unprecedented interest in interior design, particularly domestic environments, right after the tragic events of Nine Eleven. For some time, I have been commenting on the connection between the loss of control over our sense of wellbeing, brought on by the terrorist attacks, and a stampede into domestic realms, possibly suburban, reduced to playgrounds of anxiety sublimation for a yet to be regained confidence. A proliferation of TV programs dedicated to interior makeovers followed the tragedy, where destruction was treated as a practical joke played by a neighbor in exchange of a brand-new domestic environment. This collective

stampede to domestic interiors lasted at least ten years.

I took my own vacation from the architectural object while focusing on writing, school administration and interior design. To this day, architectural biennales' faith in the object induces in me a mixture of nostalgia and cynicism: there is no way I can listen to so many buzzwords and chants of optimism without cringing involuntarily. I get it: a secondary city wants a revamping, and architects are suckers when confronted with powerful people with clear agendas.

My healthy relationship with immateriality in architecture makes me an enthusiastic audience at performance art events put together by architects in the context of a biennale. Andrés Jaque's queering of late modernist convictions in his Superpowers of Ten and Bryony Roberts' occupation of Mies' Federal Center were on my list of never to be missed events. To turn exploited office employees into voluntary actors, as Jaque did, had layers of perversity that went straight to my alley. Robert's appropriation of black bodies, on the contrary, made me cry out of anger for the amount of self-discipline it took to avoid making a scene and impulsively stopping the show.

I was already upset with the lack of dialogue and actual debate when most of the audience of these events during inaugural week seem busier networking and making sure that they sound smart and that no expression or exchange might jeopardize their access to another biennial, university job, curator gig or research grant. I understand why we prefer to remain quiet. It took me a week to get out of my self-imposed silence.

Nine Eleven was a moment of active silencing of voices, an aftermath of violence that brought new levels of censorship in media and popular culture, as well as universities. We might have recovered the confidence in architectural objects, but the censorship remained in place.

I am not even sure I can openly say what I think of Roberts' piece, and I am fully aware of the consensus among American audiences that

there is nothing wrong with a white architect collaborating with an African American troupe of adorable teenagers in a Mies van der Rohe building for the biggest event on town.

Well, I disagree. When brown bodies are sent to American wars, because there are not many options left to them to access education or even jobs, there is nothing cute about displaying their military discipline to a mostly white audience of educated citizens. The fear of brown bodies rebelling against the discipline that has tried to keep them "in their place," has been recently projected in the media with new levels of paranoia, due in fact, to the vocal reactions seen under the Black Lives Matters rubric as a response to the slow genocide of black populations perpetrated by the police in this country.

Apparently, brown bodies can only rebel against "civilizing" geometries when they take the shape of an erotic dance, as it happened sometimes during the otherwise extraordinary South Shore Drill Team choreography that Robert astutely appropriated for her formal commentary on Mies.

We do not need to be reminded of the association between the universal grid, modernity, imperialism and slavery. And if that was the intention, to reflect on that difficult correlation, something needed to happen; something needed to be twisted, shifted, renegotiated or reconfigured.

There is nothing subversive about giving fake guns to brown bodies that cannot defend themselves from institutional aggression; there is nothing subversive about the celebration of discipline applied to a body in order to repress actual emancipation, or as a twisted instrument of sublimation. There is nothing new about using geometry to control libidos and political insurgence. There is nothing new on claiming collaboration, when there is appropriation; or domesticating the bodies we fear. There is nothing new with depoliticizing architectural education to the point that nobody sees anything anymore, other than disgruntled objectors, chips on the shoulders, marginal voices of resistance to the imperial common sense and its weapons of mass consensus.

THE SKOONHALL KONSTHALL 2000

Alfredo Jaar

"I was shocked to discover that a community could exist for thirty years without any visible cultural or exhibition space. How do you represent it the absence of this space for culture in an entire community? I found it hard to believe that people could live without it the intellectual and critical stimulus that visual art can provide" to question, to speculate, and to search. It blew my mind. I sought a spectacular way to deal with this lack. I created an exhibition space for twenty-four hours and then burned it away I wanted to offer a glimpse of what contemporary art is and what it can do in a community. Then by "disappearing" it in such a spectacular way, I hoped to reveal its absence".



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ABOUT SPECULATIVE TRIBUNE

This periodic newspaper is part of the project ESPECULOPOLIS, developed by TOMA within the context of the Chicago Architecture Biennial between October 3, 2015 and 3 January 2016.

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The editorial process is cumulative and collective. It works independently, as a critical instrument to the context in which it is inserted. The newspaper is a platform of collective reflection.

Each section of the newspaper is open to be produced by any interested person. These contributions can be made through our email to grupotoma@gmail.com

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